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Bard

ORCHIDS

Room on board.

Regular schedule as:

the king sets out at noon-o-five
to inspect her mysterious peonies.

Rain later. The Scythian

Ambassador sends a curious
three volume history of the North Pole
bound in elkhide? Why?

Why such commotion, many words,
flags nervous in the wind, wars,
reassurances? All history
seems to be about cutting down trees.

A man named Rumphius spent
his life painting and describing orchids.
What have I done to pay my fare?
one arbor vitae planted and some snow.

1 August 2004

ORCHIDS, 2

Love is longer than your hair
I am perishable the way a cloud is not
but my shape lasts a little longer.
Consolations of insanity. A dream

that eats breakfast with you,
idle stones, busy shadows,
I read a book where a man had ruins
and a road could talk to you in the dark.

I guess I'm saying turn the light off,
I'm old enough to sleep in the dark.
A picture of an orchid lied to me,
it said I am a rower, we are high in the sky.

1 August 2004

ORCHIDS, 3

I never know what I'm thinking
till I see it written out
leaf murderers are just wind gusts
when I calm down

do you want to hear about my purity
fear poverty needs? she said need
I said desire I am still
on my side though Time hath dimidiated

both for me and a patient simplicity
dawned, damned, that would have pained
me unspeakably in the days of argument
because I will not be a preacher

doesn't mean there is no church.

1 August 2004

=====

How far can I go
with going?

The mothers
who made speech
listened hard

all morning
past noon
till dark
they spoke

bringing things back by language
when the dark took them away

the women who made language
were the only miracle
every skill, *πασαι τεχναι βροτοισιν*
came from them
talking in the dark.

1 August 2004

=====

To see a thing
before it's there

and I look up
a fawn
is stepping past me
in the underbrush

and two more behind it
for a few minutes they stand
watch, nibble,
consent to feed
ten feet away
from their beholder

the wood is green
the door lock feels the key

the king has come home.

1 August 2004

=====

I could almost sleep
and it could be waiting

sometimes thunder
but the rain stopped

summerhouse
let the dome of sky be

yurt or gur or tent or spear
let a rag soaked in kerosene

stuffed in a tin can on a stick
and set on fire be the sun

a torch at midnight
having its own conversation

if only we could listen
listening is so hard

embarrassing slow
and it takes so long to be sure

that what you hear is what is there
not just noise the mind makes up

to fill the intolerable silences
listen he said again the deer

have gone further in the woods now
you can hear them listen

but the leaves are still telling
about everything that passed

the nibbled ivy
knows something too.

1 August 2004

=====

my legs don't bend

I must be some sort of king

1 VIII 04

=====

Not conscious of the road
till the car is gone

mercy on the smallest
unharsh, like the least reptile

of all such, blue vault
what do you see over Midian?

telephone. What is in your hand.
The thing about the bible is the always of it

now turns permanent and real, read
in the shadow of the word,

the written is all there is.
All I want to do is write the bible

but one without Amelekites to smite
one without vengeance

where exile is a celebration
and you sleep with me.

2 August 2004

=====

Late at night the white car goes back and forth.

When I was a child there were no white cars.

When I was a mouth you were a word.

When I was a word you were an ear.

We have always always will be

time has nothing to do with it

but rhythm does. Color does. And watching.

2 August 2004

=====

Not blind but not remembering.

Not deaf but reaching out a hand to hear the way.

Only has to be now.

Sunlight on the trees and nothing moves.

2 August 2004

=====

When I was a kid there seemed to be a lot
of locking ourselves out and climbing in the window.
Doors were more difficult then
and the moon was brighter. We dimmed it
by arriving, it seems to be I could hardly
look at it when it was full, so many things
from which I look away. And if I lose
all the poems I'll likely write this month in France
there'll still be France. Mountain. River.
Ocean. No house will fall. No door will notice.
Not many will be aggrieved. To lose
things that no one will miss, a sacrifice
like a feeble kind of Mass, stabbing
the bread, screaming at the wine.

2 August 2004

RIVERS OF EDEN

Of course from the oldest time
a river flows
or four of them and we have to test
the current of each one
to ask not where it came from
—they all come from her lap—
but where we are now.

The rivers are streams of instructions
and there are four.
The rivers that flow from Paradise
are four different ways of remembering —

where those rivers reach the sea
they taste very different from each other
but the water is the same, taste and see

rinse out and cherish the places
through which your river passed
all the Indias and Israels
and taste the chemistry of God.

2 August 2004

=====

If you stop reading the novel
the story never ends –
all those narratives keep going
in and around you forever

Even forgetting them doesn't interrupt
the ceaseless consequences of words

In a way it is a charity, a mitzva
to stop reading, to let them go on their own way
building their everlasting love affairs and wars

the way God fell asleep over his books one night
and here we are.

2 August 2004

=====

The woods. It's not good
to talk too much about sacred places.
People hear you thinking, and then

the invading, the laying waste.
Locust in the thicket and the radio plays.
But what it does is not what I call play.

It repeats and repeats what no one said
and it is not dhikr, doesn't hold
the mind loose in its dancer's tether –
the mind flees outward past the music
to where the music drives it, in the desert.

If there is a sacred grove
keep it inviolate. Silence.
We are protected only by what we protect.

temenos: we mark it out after we find it, the sacred precinct.

nemus: the contours are already given,
self-marked by the wood's bounds
we read and understand.

3 August 2004

=====

Niagara

call the plumber
the earth seethes
with renovation

he stops astonished
on his door step
the lawn littered
with living things

terror of lives
that have nothing to
do with us
suddenly doing with us.

Go back inside.
Paradise
is made of all
you can remember

of it, green,
the water going,
something else
staying else.

3 August 2004

PARADISE

is made of inside

I think I thought it said
a page I wrote another day
and God knows what I meant

something speaks and something listens
otherwise all there is
is cars going to work

and work always waiting to be done

the mind works that way
the *restless one*.

4 August 2004

=====

Spartan manners.

Rugose polity:

hide behind the skirts of words.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE ASSASSINS

for Hakim Bey

Did John Wilkes Booth crave to be warmed
in Lincoln's bosom? Was the pistol shot
the last expostulation of his tenderness?
Is it love that does all this?

Desire. Seek a new father,
a final father. Booth found only the dark mother.
What is in their minds, the ones
who lift their hands against another's body?

Besa among the Albanians is the blood-feud.
Yet King Zog knew he was safe, any man is safe,
when escorting his mother across the little public garden
or any woman.

And Zog said: "our duty is to love the Albanian language
with all our heart, to guard it as the most precious jewel ... to study it carefully. For a
national language is always wiser than the wisest of those who speak it."

Walk quiet, holding language by the hand.

4 August 2004

Things to think about along the way to the airport:

how a heart 'flutters'

like the quick veiling of the sun by a cloud

like the tongue of a clarinetist

cosmic intermittency

no refuge from karma

except high motivation and compassion

seeing things right dag.snang

veils

homecomings disasters fears

but still the stars manage to come out

how thin the earth we live on –

twenty five thousand miles wide and not five miles high

surfacers are we, humus-clingers, *humani*.

4 August 2004

=====

the poet is a captured soldier
brainwashed by music
spouting out
everything he knows
or guesses or makes up
to satisfy his interrogators

4 August 2004
aboard Swissair to Geneva

=====

Milky certainties.

A map of the world on the monitor
looks like an old man saying his rosary.

Soon the air will welcome us
the sky is all waiting.

4 VIII 04, Swissair

AN ODE TO CAROLINE BERGVALL

Caroline Bergvall, an ode to.
Coroline Bergvall, an ode to.
Corolone Bergvall, an ode to.
Corolono Bergvall, an ode to.
Corolono Borgvall, an ode to.
Corolono Borgvoll, an ode to.
Corolono Borgvoll, on ode to.
Corolono Borgvoll, on odo to.
Corolono Borogvoll, on odo to.
Corolono Borogovoll, on odo to.
Corolono Borogovolol, on odo to.
Corolono Borogovololo, on odo to.
Corolono Borogovololo, ono odo to.
Corolono Borogovololo, ono odo to O!
Bo nowo O con spokoboto wohoto O
mono to soyo, o poroco-oso oso tho no!
Oronoto gorodo wolo olowoyoso
boronogo oso joyo o!

4 August 2004

Swissair, in flight

DES INDES

The accent of the smells is enough to go by,
sounds make colors, aromas,
tristesses.

4 VIII 04

=====

A little sleep makes this tomorrow.
I am wedged into my seat over the coast of Brittany
875 kilometers to go.
They say. So now I know.

Below us, smooth rippling cloud cover
and below that, the political earth.
Below that, the shadow kingdom of the First Time.

That's always there.
Poseidon's kingdom
from which the words, those monsters, rise
till finally the gods
the first of whom is a woman.
Up here there's nothing but us.

5 August 2004
Swissair, in flight

OVER AQUITAINE

I am fascinated by the sense that below us, below the land of Raffarin and Pasqua and Chirac, there is a permanent and secret Europe whose story is still unfinished,

that is ripening, and ripening – like Deleuze's rhizome – under America too. It may be that most of the movement of peoples from political Europe to the Americas, later Australia, was engineered by the ripening outward of that secret, sacred, story

whose lineaments we begin to guess from chansons de geste and Arthurian tales, from the Mabinogion and the Ulster cycle, from King Laurin in his rose garden –

as if when it is said that Arthur is the once and future king (*rex olim et futurus*) it doesn't mean that that Arthur will come again but that Arthur, conceived at the beginning, is still ripening, his acorn planted, his time yet to come.

We read it everywhere, the eschaton, the Second Coming which is really the First Coming, the first speech for which we're waiting, when the ground speaks,

the little seed of some historical Jesus come to flower, maybe that too is part of the story. Because Europe is the future, Europe is the secret futuring of the story outward. That is why the borderlines of duchy and kingdom and republic keep changing, the flow of oil on water, color on color,

and America, that wants to be Europe's future, may be only one color of its palette, one mark scratched on its old walls. And we who come back are the same as when we set out, baffled, weary, wealthy with coming and going, always the unlikeliest arrivals.

5 August 2004

=====

Thus we sit at the moment
under the Niobe rock
a rock is always grieving
the bicyclist is always uphill
and the town is closed.
Setting sunlight through the window
illuminating Saint Antoine, St Guérin,
through them to us
one sweats in the old church
more wood than stone,
the church of La Moussiere.

10 August 04, La Borne

=====

The recalcitrant barber refuses
to shave the rock,
let the mountain take care of itself
if it has a self
I barely have one anymore
the wind has taken so much away
the shadows on the mountain
moving fast, shadows of the cloudlike a huge hand maybe
reaching for something
the sky is a blind man
fumbling in the light

La Borne, 13 August 2004

====

the careful blue zenana
leaves alcoves for women different
from those the pasha thinks he has
inside, instead
they are Icelanders, Newaris,
Tahitians, Nebraskans, nobody
knows where such girls come from
and older women too
who are they, thousands
of them now, every inch
of the women's quarters full of women
like butterflies like molten iron
like spruce cones like limestone
like glasses of milk like blue gas jets
everywhere and everything
and all of them waiting for him.
He flees by night into the desert
but their names turn into stars
and dazzle him, he falls from his mount,
nomads bury him beneath loose stones
and the women discuss him for days
as if he was somehow one more
runaway slave.

13 August 2004, La Borne